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10 March 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: John K. Vance

SUBJECT : Continuous Monitoring of AEGIS Performance

We have discussed at various times the possibility of incorporating some continuous monitoring procedures into AEGIS. I believe it is highly desirable that we obtain some regular controlled feedback from system users. It is particularly important that we identify searches with which the user is dissatisfied. The reasons for these failures can then be analyzed and the data thus collected can be fed back into the system to allow system improvements to be made.

I have attached a draft of a form that might be used to obtain the type of user feedback required. I know that many of your staff are resistant to the idea of having users complete forms. However, this type of form requires the minimum of effort to complete and is not, to my mind, placing excessive demands upon the user. In fact it seems a small price to pay for receipt of a fairly comprehensive search through the intelligence documentation of the last 2-3 years. If the form were typeset it might be reduced to about 5" x 8" which is certainly not an excessive length. If the worst comes to the worst you can always have the search analyst complete the form, on behalf of the user, by way of a telephone conversation.

Such a form will give a relatively crude indication of the recall and precision of the search but it will give a fairly good idea of user satisfaction. If you could obtain a completed form for every search conducted you would have established a very useful continuous monitoring operation at minimal cost.

The CRS analyst conducting the search would have the responsibility for collecting a completed form from the user, say within two weeks of completion of the search. Precision, recall and novelty estimates, along with the user's over-all assessment of utility, would be recorded and reported. Perhaps this data could

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be incorporated into the management information system to allow the production of consolidated summaries and possibly the analysis of trends.

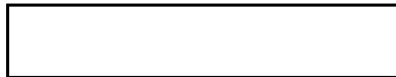
The CRS analyst conducting the search would have the responsibility for carrying out an analysis on any searches that produced an unusually low performance (say, less than 30% of the retrieved citations being relevant or the use in which the user estimates that the search retrieved only 50% or less of the relevant documentation) in order to determine reasons for these failures. Hopefully, these searches would be a very small minority. Whenever the result of the analysis revealed a factor of general interest or applicability, a memorandum would be generated for distribution throughout ISG.

Time expenditure, of both users and CRS staff, should be minimal in a monitoring operation of this type. The operation may also have an important public relations benefit - it alerts the CRS analyst to cases of user dissatisfaction. Discussion between the analyst and the user may help to smooth over some of these situations (it could be, for example, that the user did not make a very good request). If the feedback is received promptly, it is possible that a revised search could be conducted in time to be of value to the user.

I still feel that there is a great deal to be said for having the user put his request in writing on a search request form, particularly if this can be designed in such a way to help him make a better request.

Perhaps we should discuss some of these points further.

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Attachment

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